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VI.—THE SOMA OFFERING IN A FRAGMENT OF ALKMAN.

The interpretation of Alkman, Fragment 34 (Bergk) has occasioned considerable discussion, but none of the explanations that have been suggested are entirely satisfactory. Welcker¹ long ago raised objections to Fiorillo's idea that the verses are descriptive of a Bacchante making cheese of lion's milk. Schneidewin² agreed that this interpretation should be rejected; but he was not satisfied with Welcker's rendering for line 5, nor indeed with a conjecture of his own. Most editors and commentators, however, have with slight variations held to Fiorillo's view, although a sacrificial offering of cheese made from the milk of lions has in its favor neither testimony nor probability.

A way out of the difficulties may be found by referring the description to the Aryan soma sacrifice.³ The fragment from Alkman runs as follows:

Πολλάκι δ' ἐν κορυφαῖς ὀρέων ὄκα
θεοῖσι Φάδη πολύφανος ἐορτά,
χρύσιον ἄγγος ἔχοισα μέγαν σκύφον,
οἷά τε ποιμένες ἄνδρες ἔχουσιν,
χερσὶ λεόντειον σπαλαθεῖσα⁴
τυρὸν ἐτύρρησας μέγαν ἄτρυνον
Ἀργεῖφόντα.⁵

¹ Rh. Mus. X, p. 255 ff. Cf. Schreiber in Roscher's Lexikon, I, 565.

² Philol. X, p. 349 ff.

³ The liquor prepared from the juice of a plant named soma was offered in libation to the gods. The liquor itself was also called soma, and was deified under the same appellation. "The exhilarating and invigorating action of soma led to its being regarded as a divine drink that bestows everlasting life. Hence it is called *amṛita*, the 'immortal' draught (allied to the Greek *ambrosia*). . . In some of the latest hymns of the Rigveda Soma begins to be somewhat obscurely identified with the moon. . . The identification is a commonplace in the Brāhmaṇas, which explain the waning of the moon as due to the gods and fathers eating up the ambrosia of which it consists. . . A comparison of the Avesta with the Rigveda shows clearly that soma was already an important feature in the mythology and cult of the Indo-Iranian age". (Macdonell, Hist. of Sanskr. Lit., p. 98 ff.) The Avestan name of the plant is haoma.

⁴ Manuscript authority gives λεόντειον ἐπαλαθεῖσα. For interpretation of the present reading see below.

⁵ ἀργεῖοφρονται A, ἀργεῖοφόνται BP.

Now if we compare these lines with accounts of the soma offering, we find them in remarkable agreement, point by point.

ἐν κορυφαῖς ὀρέων] In the Rig-Veda and the Avesta there is frequent reference to the mountain habitat of the soma plant; but in the present passage we are concerned rather with the place of sacrifice. Regarding this, the Çatapatha-Brahmaṇa (III 1, 1, 1) gives the following direction: "They choose a place of worship. Let them choose (the place) which lies highest, and above which no other part of the ground rises". (Eggeling.) On such a spot the soma altar is erected.

πολύφανος¹] Words expressing brilliance are especially characteristic of descriptions of the soma sacrifice; e. g., RV. IX 64, 28: "Bright are these Somas blent with milk, with light that flashes brilliantly". (Griffith.) Avest. Yas. X 19: "These and thou art mine, and forth let thine exhilarations flow; bright and sparkling let them hold on their (steadfast) way". (Mills.)

χρύσιον ἄγγος] Golden vessels appear in both the Vedic and the Avestan ceremonial. RV. IX 75, 3: "Sending forth flashes he hath bellowed to the jars, led by men into the golden reservoir". (Griffith.) Avest. Yas. X 17: "Thereupon spake Zarathustra: Praise to H(a)oma, Mazda-made. Good is H(a)oma, Mazda-made. All the plants of H(a)oma praise I, on the heights of lofty mountains, in the gorges of the valleys, in the clefts (of sun-dered hillsides) cut for the bundles bound by women. From the silver cup I pour Thee to the golden chalice over". (Mills.)

ἐχοῖσα] Evidence that women, sometimes at least, had a part in the rite is found in RV. I 28, 3: "There where the woman marks and learns the pestle's constant rise and fall, O Indra, drink with eager thirst the droppings which the mortar sheds". (Griffith.) Compare the quotation just given from the Avesta.

χερσὶ λεόντειον σπαλαθείσα] This line has constituted the chief crux of the fragment, and calls for fuller exposition.

The only passage that is cited from Greek literature for express mention of the soma sacrifice is found in Plutarch's account of Zoroastrianism (De Is. et O. 46): πόαν γάρ τινα κόπτοντες ὁμῶμι καλουμένην ἐν ὄλμῳ, τὸν Ἄϊδην ἀνακαλοῦνται καὶ τὸν σκότον· εἶτα μίξαντες αἵματι λύκου σφαγέντος εἰς τόπον ἀνήλιον ἐκφέρουσι καὶ ρίπτουσι. Now in Geoponika 2, 42, 3, the term ἡ λεόντειος πόα appears as an equiva-

¹ For a defense of the form see Schubert, Misc. zum Dialekte Alkmans, p. 42 f.

lent of λέοντος βοτάνη or λεοντεία βοτάνη, a plant that is said to be called also ὀροβάκχη.¹ Under this last name Dioskorides² describes a plant having a reddish color and a succulent stem,—leading characteristics of the Vedic soma.³ The juice of the ὀροβάκχη must have been of value, for Dioskorides speaks of the method by which it was extracted.

The conclusion that Alkman's λεόντειον refers to a plant-juice may be reached by another line of argument. According to Du Cange, *laserpitium* was sometimes glossed: λεοντόγαλα,⁴ ὅπως Κυρηναϊκός. Now *laserpitium* and ὅπως Κυρηναϊκός denote the juice of the silphion, and extant descriptions attribute to the silphion the principal characteristics common to the sacred plants of the Veda and the Avesta. Soma, haoma and silphion all yield a milky juice having wonderful properties;⁵ all grow on the mountains;⁶

¹ In this passage, as well as in the passages cited below from Theophrastos, there are two readings, ὀροβάγχη and ὀροβάκχη. Theophrastos (H. P. 8, 4; C. P. 5, 15, 5) writes of a plant that twines about vetches and chokes them. As this is clearly not the plant described by Dioskorides (De Mat. Med. 2, 171 Spr.), it seems reasonable to assume a confusion between two plants having similar names, ὀροβ-άγχη and ὀρο-βάκχη. The latter name is peculiarly appropriate for a plant having the character of soma. (Cf. Schol. Nik. Ther. 512: βάκχην δὲ ἀμπελὸν ἢ μυρρίνην. Hesych. ὀροβάκχη· βοτάνη τις· οἱ δὲ τῆς βοτάνης τοὺς καρπούς, οὓς ἔνιοι κυτίνουσιν. On the vine, pomegranate, soma, etc., as representatives of the Tree of Life in Oriental art, see D'Alviella, Migration of Symbols, p. 153 f., Eng. ed.)

² De Mat. Med. 2, 171: Ὀροβάγχη [*legg.* ὀροβάκχη] [οἱ δὲ κυνομόριον, οἱ δὲ λέοντα, Κύπριοι δὲ θυρσίην καλοῦσιν, ὃ κοινῶς λύκος ὀνομάζεται] καυλίον ἐστὶν ὑπέρυθρον, ὡς δισπιθαιμαῖον, ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ μεῖζον, ἀφυλλόν [*Sprengel; vulgo φύλλοις*], ὑπολίπαρον, ἐνδασν, τρυφερόν, ἀνθεσιν ὑπολεύκοις ἢ μηλίζουσι κεχρημένον· ῥίζα δὲ ὑπερστί δακτύλου τὸ πάχος, κατατετρημένη πρὸς τὴν καυλοῦ ξηρασίαν. The sentence following should be referred to the ὀροβάγχη.

³ Hillebrandt, Ved. Mythol., Vol. I. Soma u. verwandte Götter, pp. 12 f., 18 ff., 29 f. Just what plant the Vedic soma was neither philologists nor botanists have as yet determined. Indeed, it is almost vain to hope for certain identification. The Çatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (IV 5, 10) enumerates plants that might be substituted for the soma; and it is not improbable that even at the time of the Vedas, use was made of more than one kind of plant.

⁴ An erroneous interpretation may underlie the remark of Aristides (I, 49): ὥσπερ καὶ λεόντων γάλα ἀμέλγειν ἀνέθηκε τις αὐτῷ [τῷ Διονύσῳ] Λακωνικὸς ποιητής. The verb 'milk' is used of extracting the soma juice, e. g., RV. VIII 1, 17. Cf. ἀμέλγειν, Anth. P. 9, 645.

⁵ RV. IX, passim; Avest. Yas. IX-X; Theophr. H. P. 6, 3; Plin. N. H. 19, 15.

⁶ RV. IX 82, 3; Avest. Yas. X 3; Theophr. H. P. 6, 3, 6; 6, 5, 2.

all are plucked by birds;¹ all have the epithet 'golden';² all are intimately connected with the rain.³ Moreover, the characterization of the silphion as *ναρθηκῶδες*⁴ opens the way for connecting this plant, like soma, with the fire myth. In view of these correspondences, the silphion may be regarded as a Greek equivalent of the soma.⁵ That the lion was associated with the silphion plant is further attested by some of the early coins of Kyrene, which show the silphion with a lion or a lion's head as an accessory in the field.⁶

But the silphion belonged especially to Kyrene; was there a plant having similar associations in the country of Alkman? This seems very probable when we recall that Kyrene was

¹ RV. IV 26, 6; Avest. Yas. X 11; Ael. N. A. 9, 32.

² RV. IX 92, 1: "Diese Bezeichnung durch *hari* [golden] hat aber besonderen Wert; denn es ist bekannt, dass die avestischen Texte wiederholt von dem *zāiri*, *zāirigaonō haomō* sprechen (Yasna IX 16, 30; X 12 u. s.), allerdings ohne uns zu sagen, ob dies mit Bezug auf Stengel, Blätter oder Früchte gilt. Es ist demnach überaus wahrscheinlich, dass schon der indoiranischen Zeit dieselbe Farbe als Zeichen der echten Somapflanze galt". (Hillebrandt, op. cit., p. 25.) Theophr. H. P. 6, 3, 5: τὸ δὲ φύλλον τῇ χροίᾳ χρυσοειδὲς εἶναι.

³ The Rig-Veda (IX 82, 3) represents Soma as the child of Parjanya, the rain-god. Cf. Hillebrandt, op. cit., p. 55 ff. Avest. Yas. X 3: "I praise the cloud that waters thee, and the rains which make thee grow on the summits of the mountains". (Mills.) Theophr. C. P. 1, 5, 1: οὕτω γὰρ καὶ τὸ σίλφιον ἀνατεῖλαι φασιν ἐν λιβύῃ πιττώδους τινὸς ὕδατος γενομένου καὶ παχέος.

On the soma offering as a rain-charm see Oldenberg, Religion des Veda, p. 603. The seal described by Furtwängler (Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture, p. 469 ff., Eng. ed.) and Morgan (Transac. A. P. A. 32, p. 96 ff.) seems to represent the bringing of the soma plants, which were "carried on a cart drawn by two rams or he-goats". (Stevenson, Transl. Sāma-Veda, p. iv.)

⁴ Theophr. H. P. 6, 3, 1; Diosk. 3, 84. Cf. Kuhn, Herabkunft d. Feuers u. d. Göttertranks, p. 24.

⁵ This view is confirmed by various features of the Kyrene myth, notably the connection of Kyrene with the Kentaur Chiron and with the physician god, Aristaïos, who fed on nectar and ambrosia, who introduced the cultivation of the silphion, and who brought relief in time of drought. Details of representations of Kyrene in art are hereby explained. The cock acquires significance as an emblem of fire; the vine symbolizes the exhilarating drink; and the winged figures on the vase from Naukratis appear to be *cidola* seeking the draught that makes immortal. (Cf. Studniczka in Roscher's Lexikon, 2, 1724 ff.) The prominence of the lion in the Kyrene myth is particularly interesting for the present argument.

Head, Hist. Num., p. 726 f.

founded by Theraians,¹ who were descendants of colonists from Lakedaimon. In a new home, the settlers would naturally seek out a plant that they had held sacred, or would transfer the associations to a plant resembling the one with which they had been familiar. Now Theophrastos (H. P. 6, 3, 1) and Dioskorides (3, 84) say that the leaf of the silphion is like that of the selinon, and Pindar (N. 6, 42) calls the selinon *βοτάνα λέοντος*. The use of selinon wreaths at feasts and in funeral ceremonies is in harmony with the character of soma as intoxicating and as conferring immortality.² It may be noted, too, that selinon³ conforms to the mythological conception of the sacred tree as representing the female principle in nature. If the selinon figured in a Dorian cult, we can the more readily see why it formed the victors' chaplets at the Nemean and Isthmian games.

The name 'lion-plant'⁴ for an equivalent of soma can offer no difficulty: the lion is associated not only with fire, but also with the pouring out of waters and with the sacred tree.

¹Excavations at Thera show that the art of the island employed the lion as an important symbol. (Hiller v. Gärtringen, Arch. Anz., 1899, pp. 183, 190.)

²Cf. the expression *σελίνου δείται*.

³Hesychios and Photios, s. v.

⁴The Greeks as well as the Indians appear to have connected the plant with the moon. An important passage is found in Ps.-Plut., De Fluv. XVIII 4-5: Παράκεινται δ' αὐτῷ ὄρη Μυκήναί τε καὶ Ἀπέσαντος, καὶ Κοκκύγιον καὶ Ἀθηναῖον, τὰς προσηγορίας εἰληφότα διὰ τοιαύτην αἰτίαν. Τὸ μὲν Ἀπέσαντον ἐκαλεῖτο πρότερον Σεληναῖον. Ἦρα γάρ, παρ' Ἡρακλέους δίκας βουλομένη λαβεῖν, συνεργὸν παρέλαβε τὴν Σελήνην· ἥ δ' ἐπωδαῖς χρησαμένη μάγοις, ἀφροῦ κίστην ἐπλήρωσεν, ἐξ ἧς γεννηθέντα λέοντα μέγιστον Ἴρις ταῖς ἰδίαις ζώναις ἐπισφίγξασα, κατήνεγκεν εἰς ὄρος Ὀφέλιον· ὁ δὲ ποιμένα τινὰ τῶν ἐγχωρίων, Ἀπέσαντον, σπαράξας ἀνείλεν· κατὰ δὲ θεῶν πρόνοιαν ὁ τόπος Ἀπέσαντος ἀπ' αὐτοῦ μετωνομάσθη· καθὼς ἱστορεῖ Δημόδοκος ἐν α' Ἡρακλείας. Γεννᾶται δ' ἐν αὐτῷ βοτάνη, σελήνη καλουμένη· τὸν δὲ καταφερόμενον ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἀφρόν περὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ θέρους οἱ ποιμένες αἰροντες ἀλείφουσι τοὺς πόδας, καὶ οὐδὲν ὑπὸ τῶν ἐρπετῶν ἀδικοῦνται. (All the details of this story point to the soma (or divine drink) myth; cf. on Apesantos and Opheltios, Gruppe, Gr. Mythol. u. Rel., p. 187 f.; on the foam, RV. VIII 14, 13; ÇB. 12, 7, 3, 3 f.; on the box, Gruppe, op. cit., p. 872, n. 1; on Iris, Meyer, Indog. Mythen. I, p. 155 ff.; on the girdle, Avest. Yas. IX 26; on the serpents, p. 194 below. According to De Fluv. XVIII, 9, Mt. Apesantos was called also Selinountios.) Charms recommended (Geop. 2, 42) for ridding fields of the *λέοντος βοτάνη* (here apparently confused with the *ὀροβάγχη*; cf. p. 190, n. 1 above) involve objects mythologically associated with the dawn and the sun.

If we conclude, then, that *λέοντειον* is to be understood as meaning the juice of a plant¹ equivalent to soma, the word that follows in the manuscripts—*ἐπαλαθείσα*—may be corrected to *σπαλαθείσα*, 'stirring'. Although we have no corroborative evidence for this verb, the noun *σπάλαθρον* is cited by Pollux.² With this reading the verse would closely parallel the frequent Vedic references to the preparation of soma with the hands.

Having found that this difficult line yields to the proposed interpretation, we proceed to consider the remaining points of Alkman's description.

τυρόν ἐτύρησας] One mode of preparing the soma was by adding coagulated milk. RV. IX 22, 3: "These Soma-juices, blent with curds". (Griffith.) Coagulation of the soma juice is mentioned in the Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa I 6, 4, 5-6: "They prepared soma for him [Indra]. Now this king Soma, the food of the gods, is no other than the moon. . . Having prepared and coagulated it, and made it strong (pungent), they gave it to him". (Eggeling.)

In favor of a supposition that the Greek rite was carried from Lakonia to Thera it may be noted that the evidence for *τυρός* as a sacrificial offering³ includes two inscriptions, one from Sparta and one from Thera.

¹ There is reason to believe that the traditions were attached to other plants besides those already mentioned. The *παιωνία*, or *ἀγλαοφῶτις*, for instance, has various suggestive names attributed to it: *ὀροβάξ*, *μνηρογένειον*, *μήνιον*, *σελήνιον*, *σεληνόγονος* (Diosk. 3, 147; cf. *ἀμβρόσιον βλάστημα*, Anon., Carm. de Herbis 152); according to Aelian (N. A. 14, 27), *μεθ' ἡμέραν μὲν . . . οὐκ ἔστι πάνν σύνοπτον, νύκτωρ δὲ ἐκφαίνεται καὶ διαπρέπει, ὥς ἀστήρ· φλογώδης γάρ ἐστι καὶ ἔοικε πυρί*; Theophrastos (H. P. 9, 8, 6) refers to the current belief that it should be dug at night, and that if any one gathering the fruit is seen by a woodpecker, he runs the risk of losing his eyes (on the connection of the woodpecker with soma, see Kuhn, op. cit., p. 30ff.); and Pliny (N. H. 24, 102) says that it is found growing *in marmoribus*, and is used by the Persians when they invoke the gods. Cf. further, Gubernatis, Mythol. des Plantes, passim.

² 7, 22 and 10, 113; cf. Hesych. and Phot. The mention of the *σπάλαθρον* among bakers' utensils may have some bearing on the probability of the reading proposed; for Kuhn (op. cit., pp. 105, 117, 215) has shown that bakers and bread-making have a place in the soma myth-cycle.

³ Stengel, Neue Jahrb. 125 (1882), p. 672.

ἄτρυφον] This word (equivalent to ἄθρυπτος, 'unbroken, imperishable') answers to the Sanskrit *amṛta*.¹ Hesychios² indicates that, like *amṛta*, ἄτρυφος was used as a substantive; and in Alkman's line the word is probably to be so construed (cf. v. 3).

Ἀργεῖφόντα] 'Serpent-slayer'.³ The corresponding Vedic term is *Vṛtrahan*, used most frequently of Indra, who is described as drinking great quantities of soma to stimulate him for his conflict with the serpent *Vṛtra*. RV. I 32, 3 :

" Impetuous as a bull, he chose the soma,
And drank in threefold vessels of its juices.
The Bounteous god grasped lightning for his missile,
He struck down dead that first-born of the dragons."

(Macdonell.)

As an epithet of Soma, *vṛtrahan* is parallel with the Avestan *verethrajan*, applied to Haoma. (Cf. Verethraghna.)

Argeiphontes is here presumably Apollo.⁴ The worship of Apollo Karneios was dominant at Sparta, Thera and Kyrene;

¹ The Sanskrit roots *mṛ*, 'die', and *mṛ*, 'crush, break in pieces', are "doubtless the same". (Whitney, *Roots, Verb-forms, and Prim. Deriv. of Sanskr. Lang.*, p. 124.)

² ἄτρυφος [Welcker; ἀτροφος MSS]: τυρὸς ὁ πησόμενος ὑπὸ Λακώνων.

³ Eust. II., p. 183, 12 f.: ἐτι ἰστέον καὶ ὡς ἐν τῷ Πανσανίον λεξικῷ φέρεται ἀργεῖφόντης ὁ ὀφιοκτόνος· ἀργην γάρ, φησιν, ἐνιοι τὸν ὄφιν καλοῦσιν. Cf. Harpokr.: Δωριεῖς, μάλιστα δ' Ἀργεῖοι, τὸν ὄφιν ἀργᾶν ἐκάλονν. The parallelism of *Vṛtra* and the *Gandharvas* as causing drought (Meyer, op. cit., I, p. 169 f.), and a corresponding interpretation of ἀργῆς as both serpent and Centaur (Et. Gud. 72, 52 ff.); the connection of drought with the absence of Io under guard (Soph. Inachos; cf. v. Wilamowitz, Eurip. Herakles I, p. 88, n. 53); the appearance of Πήκος (Πίκος) ὁ καὶ Ζεὺς, Διβὴν and τὸ Σίλπιον ὄρος in the Io story (Suidas s. v. Ἰώ); a presumable equivalence of Hermes, Kadmos and Telephos as serpent-slayers (Gruppe, op. cit., pp. 635, 1327 f.); the connection of Hermes with ambrosia and with potent herbs (Meyer, op. cit., I, p. 207; Roscher, Rh. Mus. 53, p. 190); a correspondence of the Argos peacock with peacocks as guardians of the Tree of Life (D'Alviella, op. cit., pp. 114 f., 138);—these points and others, which cannot be enumerated here, plainly indicate the direction in which we must look for light on the history of the Argeiphontes myth. Possibly the Roman *Argei* are to be traced back to the same source.

⁴ Et. Gud. 72, 52 (s. v. Ἀργεῖφόντης): παρὰ δὲ Σοφοκλεῖ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, καὶ παρὰ Παρθενίῳ καὶ ἐπὶ Τηλέφῳ. The name of Telephos, 'Far-shining', and his overthrow by the vine of Bakchos suggest again the soma myth.

and in view of the significance of the ram as rain-bringing,¹ a connection of this cult with the myths under consideration would not be far to seek.

Further examination lies beyond the scope of the present paper ; but the evidence brought forward shows that the development of the soma sacrifice must be placed earlier than the so-called Indo-Iranian period ; that the connection of soma with the moon may without hesitation be attributed to pre-Vedic times ; and that the Argeiphontes myth is to be traced back to an Indo-European cycle relating to the ambrosial draught and rain.

WINIFRED WARREN WILSON.

¹ Meyer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 138 ff.